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desirous of having, and are indulgent to, a young wife (*pɔɣabil*), not only for sexual motives but also, and mainly, in order to have a strong young woman about the house to administer those creature comforts to which they are said to become more and more addicted as they grow older. Thus siblings by the same father (*ba ukɔla biis*) may differ in age by as much as a generation. A man's younger half-brother or sister may be younger than his own children though senior to them in generation. This has important effects on the lineage organization.

The custom of the levirate introduces a component of some significance in the constitution of the joint family. In the 61 domestic families of our sample there were 111 married men, and no less than 21—more than one in five—had one or more inherited wives. An inherited wife usually brings her young children by her first husband (if she has any) with her. They grow up side by side with her children by her second husband, who is responsible for their support. Tale kinship ideas make this a simple and self-evident arrangement; but it means, nevertheless, a division within what is normally the most compact and cohesive element of the domestic family, the matricentral *dug*, in accordance with the different paternity of the children. Generally a widow of child-bearing age marries a close agnate of her deceased husband—his brother or first cousin—who is, therefore, a close classificatory father of her children. This makes it easy for them to regard her second husband with some of the devotion and affection due from children to their own father, especially if they are still very young. Still, this is a weak place in the cohesion of a family, at which a split easily occurs; for no man, say the Tallensi, can wholly take the place of one's true father. If a widow marries a distant agnate of her late husband, the latter's heir may demand the custody of his children when they are old enough to do without a mother's care. This splits the *dug*. But it also creates compensatory bonds of uterine (*soog*) kinship between her sons belonging to different lineage segments.

Sometimes a man's dependants include a deceased brother's children whose mother has died or married out of the family. Such children are, for all practical purposes, his own children, but the sons frequently secede when they have children. Much less commonly, a man may have an orphaned sister's son (*ahɔŋ*) living with him in as intimate a relationship, ostensibly, as if he were his son or brother. Actually, both jural and sentimental reservations hedge round a sister's son's position in the family, for his descent bars him, in the last resort, from ever acquiring real filial status.[1] It is significant that in the old settlements extremely few cases of this kind occur, and it is always assumed that the nephew will eventually return to his natal settlement—though he does not always do so. In the new settlements, where personal kinship ties largely replace lineage ties as the basis of local aggregation, not only sororal

[1] Cf. Ch. XI below.

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nephews but more distant cognatic and even affinal kin frequently live with a kinsman until they can set up in their own homesteads.

Sometimes, too, an unmarried sister's child (*tau-bii*) may grow up and live in its uncle's family. It may be an illegitimate child (*yi yeem bii*—a maiden's child), or one whose mother's bride-price was not paid, and who therefore belongs to her father unless or until it is redeemed (*pəhzg*) by the payment of a cow by its genitor or his heir. A sister's child is to all intents and purposes a child of the family. But not being of the true agnatic line, it is subject to certain jural disabilities which have no consequence for a girl but handicap a boy, as we have previously seen.

The domestic families of chiefs and headmen are unusual only in respect of size. Their newly won riches enable chiefs and headmen to acquire numerous wives and to maintain households that appear enormous in the eyes of the ordinary man. A petty headman may have ten or more wives. The late Chief of Tongo, a chief of modest means compared with some of his peers in Taleland, had more than thirty. The Golibdaana of Tenzugu has at least eighty. The Chief of Datoko is reputed to have a hundred, but he denies this and claims to have only a modest fifty. Except that their domestic economy and organization is more complex and that there is at times more friction between the womenfolk, these hypertrophied joint families have the same pattern of organization as those of ordinary folk.

It is noteworthy that this pattern has not been disturbed by the social changes which have, in recent years, followed the subjection of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast to European political, economic, and cultural influences. Family disorganization has barely begun to appear in Taleland. There is hardly a domestic family in the country—not one in our sample—which has wholly escaped the effects of these contact influences. One or more of their members is or has been abroad in Mampurugu, Ashanti, or the Colony, for longer or shorter periods of time, farming, working for wages, or trading. But the number of men abroad, at any given time, for very long periods is relatively small[1] compared with other parts of West and Southern Africa, and their absence has little effect on the structure of the residual family. Their labour is lost to the family, but as they are no longer a drain on its resources this does not upset its internal economy. Similarly, as they are mostly young men[2] with little or no responsibility for the management of family

[1] Estimates based on my own census material and on Nominal Rolls drawn up by Administrative Officers for tax collection show that an average of just under 7 per cent. of the adult male population of Taleland were away from home and not likely to return in the immediate future, in the years 1936 to 1939. This estimate may be compared with the 60–80 per cent. of able-bodied adult males absent from tribal reserves in Northern Rhodesia and Nyassaland quoted by Lord Hailey, *African Survey*, p. 701.

[2] Reliable information on the ages of these absentees cannot be obtained. But from personal contact with many of them, both on their return home and

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Five or six years passed and Duun died. Baa was now head of the lineage and family. The patrimonial land passed to him. For a short time Duun's two sons, Saandi and Ku'ɔni, continued to occupy their late father's section of the homestead and farmed in partnership, independently of Baa. But they soon decided to move out. They went to build at Gbambee, on their late father's bush farm. At first they shared a homestead and farmed together. Then Ku'ɔni began to farm for himself and, a little later, wished to have his own gateway. At this stage the expanded family sprung from Katiŋoo consisted of two homesteads, one at Zoo, occupied by Baa and his sons with their families, who together made up a single household, and the other at Gbambee, consisting of two semi-detached parts occupied by Saandi and Ku'ɔni respectively, with their families, and constituting two separate households.

A little later Ku'ɔni separated altogether from Saandi and went to build his homestead at Zoo on a piece of land that had been their father's personal farm. This site proved to be mystically unpropitious and soon Ku'ɔni moved again. This time he returned to his father's (and grandfather's) original home (*daboog*) and built semi-detached quarters for himself adjoining Katiŋoo's old homestead, still occupied by Baa. He remained economically independent of Baa; but both he and Saandi were still under Baa's jural and ritual jurisdiction, as his brother's sons. A process of partial reintegration had, however, occurred.

Then Baa died and Saandi became head of the lineage and heir to the patrimonial land. So he moved back to Zoo, where he built semi-detached quarters for himself adjoining the group's original home. This happened quite recently; and the distribution of Katiŋoo yir is as we have described on p. 69. Saandi, Ku'ɔni, and Baa's son Ɔmara have each their separate, semi-detached quarters and their separate gateways; they are economically independent of each other; but jural and ritual jurisdiction over the unit is in Saandi's hands.

But this is not the end of the story. If Saandi were to die suddenly, none of his sons would be old enough to farm for himself and support Saandi's widows and children. So they would all join Ku'ɔni's household, and remain in his custody—the widows as his wives (unless they remarried other men, when they would fade out of the picture altogether), the children as his children—until Saandi's oldest boy was old enough to set up an independent household. The process of gradual dispersion would then start again. If, Saandi being dead, Ɔmara were also to die suddenly, leaving no son old enough to support his household, his children would also join Ku'ɔni, and thus all the branches of Katiŋoo's family would be reconstituted into a single unit for the time being. The whole cycle would take from twenty to thirty years.

Our illustration has been in part hypothetical so as not to confuse the reader with too many genealogies. But this is not a fanciful case. A dozen family histories that have followed the pattern outlined above

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596 centripetal pull of the *yir* in the economic sphere that the habit of co-operation and mutual help between the women of the household goes deeper as a rule than their inclination to think of their own *dugət* first. Thus there is a great deal of voluntary mutual aid between the women of the household. The things a woman owns she guards jealously; but she will often lend gladly to another woman of the household on the basis of the true reciprocity that prevails in family affairs. A woman who has prepared a new supply of shea butter, for instance, usually gives some to each of the other women of the household, knowing that some day she will receive gifts of a similar kind from them.

596 854 855 It is in the children of a family that the balance between *dug* and *yir* is most precisely embodied. They represent both the differentiation of *dug* from *dug* and the synthesis of all the *dugət* in the *yir*, in their most significant aspects. Thus, all the children of a man are formally the children of all his wives, and this might include the children of his brothers too. The women of a family, and especially co-wives, usually help one another a great deal in caring for one another's children. This commences with child-birth. As we have seen, the care of a parturient woman falls largely on her co-wives and other women of the same family. A new-born child is not given the breast at once by its mother but by another nursing mother; and a nursing co-wife would be the first person to be called upon. Later, the infant will often be left in the care of a co-wife for an hour or two or a whole day at a time if its mother has to be away from home. If a woman dies leaving young children, they are reared by her co-wives as a rule. When a girl becomes pregnant for the first time, it is one of her mother's co-wives who has the honour and duty of ceremonially girding her with the matron's perineal band. Co-wives often take pride in and show great devotion to one another's children. This is especially true of a senior wife past the age of child-bearing. Such a woman, identifying herself closely with the husband and being herself no longer engrossed in her own young children, mothers the children of her younger co-wives with zealous devotion.

593 736 And yet, as the natives constantly repeat, the relation of mother and child is unique. Its mother's co-wife can never be the same to the child as its own mother. A woman cannot have the same feelings towards her co-wife's child as towards her own child. The lot of an orphan, Tallensi say, even in a household full of women, is always a hard one. An orphan never receives the devoted attention and the selfless love which can be given only by its own mother. It has to depend upon the mercy and the sense of duty of women who are its mothers only in name.

602 736 This is the reason why small children left orphans are sometimes sent to live with their maternal grandmothers until they are big enough to fend for themselves. Some months after his mother's death I met Gundaat, a pathetic little chap of about 9. Talking about various things, we got on to the subject of mothers. Gundaat told me, in a tone of

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resignation that was touching in the circumstances, that he missed his mother dreadfully. When she was alive, he explained, he never went to bed hungry. She always had something for him to eat even in the leanest times. But nowadays he often slept hungry; for his other 'mothers' had their own children to think of; in times of scarcity they would put aside extra food for their own children but not for him. At best he might get the scraps.

The genealogical and social differentiation of a woman and her children from every other woman and her children of the same domestic family is the kernel of the notion of uterine (*soog*) descent. The cultural definition of this notion gets its psychological content, its meaning for the individual, from the relations of mother and child and co-wife to co-wife.

To every woman, therefore, her own children are the most complete incarnation of her own social self, of her autonomy and status in the family, and of the differentiation of her *dug* from those of her co-wives. That is what the concept *soog* means for a mother in relation to her children. Emotionally wrapped up in them as she is, she becomes almost anarchical in her concern for their welfare. There are women who resent it strongly if a co-wife scolds one of their children; and it is quite common for a woman to get into a fury if her child is struck by a co-wife's child, let alone by a co-wife herself. Many quarrels between co-wives begin in this way. That is why children are taught to keep out of their mothers' co-wives' rooms as much as possible and to behave carefully if they go into them.

The ever-present tension between co-wives, reduced to a minimum at most times, occasionally bursts out acutely. This is liable to happen if a child gets ill of a malady that defies all attempts to cure it, the more so if it is an unusual sickness of sudden onset. The distracted mother is likely then to turn on a co-wife (another wife of her husband, or a wife of one of his brothers) whose own children are well and happy and therefore the bitterest reminder of her evil fortune. Being co-wives the women are sure to have had differences and even quarrels in the past. So now the sick child's mother accuses her co-wife of being a witch (*sɔi*) and of having caused the illness of the child. Infrequent as accusations of witchcraft were in former days and are now, Tallensi say that most of them were made by women against a co-wife owing to the illness or death of a child. This is the more significant in view of the association between witchcraft and uterine descent. An accusation of witchcraft brands a woman and her children equally, but it does not impugn the male line or, consequently, the *yir*.

When hostility between co-wives reaches this pitch it cannot but result in a serious disturbance of the unity and cohesion of the family. Formerly, as we have learnt, the accused woman might have been compelled to undergo the arrow ordeal, or would herself, backed by her

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593 in illness. She is mainly responsible for their training in habits of cleanliness. She also has to teach her daughters housekeeping skills.

This formal summary is interposed here as a means of orientating our analysis. The reality, we shall find, is not so simple.

Classificatory Parents and Own Parents

593 855 736 Tallensi affirm that no one can wholly take the place of a person's own parents. A child may be brought up by its dead father's brother or dead mother's co-wife. Outwardly there is nothing to distinguish the relationship of such a child, during its pre-adolescent years, to its proxy parent from that of a child living with its natural parent. Men or women point with pride and affection to orphans in their custody as 'my children'. They claim to care for them as conscientiously and devotedly as for their own children. But, the natives say, there is always something lacking; and observation shows that the affective ties of proxy parent and child are much weaker than those of natural parent and child. Sometimes, indeed, there is an acknowledged emotional barrier between them.

One can see this in young children like Gundaat, whose story is told in a previous chapter (p. 130). A young child is more restrained, more formal, with a proxy parent than with a natural parent. Boys seem to be less amenable to proxy parents than to own parents, especially as they approach adulthood. When young men who have been abroad, [167] working in Ashanti or the Colony for a period of years, are questioned about their motives for leaving home, the commonest reason they give is the death of a parent. 'My father (*ba*) died, and my junior father (*ba-pit*) took over the house (*die yir*) and so I went away', is the usual formula. One soon discovers that there was always some tension and often friction between the youth and his father's brother. The youth says that his *ba-pit* did not treat him properly; and when one questions his *ba-pit*, he usually says 'the boy did not respect (*nan*) me'. This is a modern development of what is a deeply ingrained feature of Tale social organization. A man will often continue to live and farm with his own father until the latter's death. I know men of 40 and over who are still living with their own fathers. But very rarely does this happen with a father's brother. A dead man's sons break away from the parental home when a father's brother inherits it as soon as they are able to. In such a case there is usually a convergence of different factors of segmentary differentiation in the lineage. The emotional cleavage serves as the catalyst that directs and accelerates the normal processes of splitting along economic and structural lines of cleavage.

This is the negative aspect of the idea that one's natural parents should be one's social parents, as it appears in the classificatory extension of the parent–child relationship. On the positive side it follows from this conception that all those who are socially identifiable with

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one's parents and play a part in one's upbringing can, and in certain circumstances must, stand to one in the relation of proxy parents. The rule applies most directly to the men and women of the same domestic unit who are identified with one's parents by generation and by social role—to one's father's brothers (*sunzɔp*), including his full and half-brothers and first cousins on his father's side, who are his prospective successors; and to one's mother's co-wives (*nentaas*). If these men and women all belong to the same household they are directly concerned with the production of food, the provision of shelter, and the satisfaction of the other wants of the unit upon which the physical welfare and growth of a child depends. If the men belong to relatively autonomous economic units but to the same domestic unit, they will nevertheless have a common interest in the family patrimony, to the inheritance of which they all have rights, and a common ritual dependence on the immediate ancestors of the nuclear lineage. The women will sometimes help in caring for one another's children; the men will sometimes help one another in farming and always act as a unit in ritual and jural matters under the authority of the most senior of them. And the ritual care of a child is of as much importance as its physical care. A child will not thrive (*maan*) if it is not under the spiritual wing of its patrilineal ancestors, as we have learnt.

Outside the domestic unit the terms *ba* (father) and *ma* (mother) and the distinctive modes of behaviour correlated with them, are not extended beyond the expanded family (i.e. the family cluster built up on the inner lineage) in normal circumstances. The only exception is in the case of a uterine kinsman or kinswoman of a parent, who is identified with the foundress of the uterine line and is therefore described as a 'father' or 'mother' irrespective of genealogical distance.[1]

Within the clan or maximal lineage it is a cardinal rule that generation differences are not recognized beyond the limits of the inner lineage. 'Begetting does not cross the (inner) lineage—*dɔŋam pu yakɔt dug la*' is the Tale maxim. This is correlated with the structural relations of the inner lineage to lineage segments of higher order. The inner lineage is likely to be the widest segment with a common interest in patrimonial land. In relation to the clan or the maximal lineage it is usually the smallest recognized corporate segment, whose members are significant for the clan only as members of the segment. As will be remembered, it is also the unit within which sexual relations with a co-member's wife are definitely sinful. In short, the inner lineage (and the family cluster which is its residential and familial correlate) marks the limit beyond which a person takes part in corporate activities not in his own right and in his personal capacity but as a member of the

[1] Kinship terms without inverted commas stand for the primary meaning of the terms, e.g. (natural) father; those between inverted commas stand for the extended or derived meaning of the term, e.g. (classificatory) 'father'.

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602 613 segment. Clansmen beyond these limits are no longer concerned with the rearing of a child. They are not directly involved in either the economic or the educational or the ritual responsibility for its passage through life. Hence they all fall into the broad category of clan kin (*yidɛm*) or clan brethren (*mabiis*) irrespective of age or generation, though individuals among them might be addressed by specific kinship terms, in certain situations, as an honorific gesture. Tallensi feel that [736 768] a mother's brother (*ahɔb*) is a nearer kinsman than a contemporary of one's father of another inner lineage of the same clan; and while it is not uncommon for an orphan to go and live with his *ahɔb*, it is very rare for an orphan to join the household of a clansman of a different inner lineage.

602 613 593 Tale jural and ritual institutions show, and intelligent informants perceive quite clearly, that the emotional elements in the relationship of parent and child are distinct from the jural and moral elements. There are both pragmatic and ritual sanctions for the latter but not for the former. Indeed the emotional elements sometimes serve as a sanction or as a rationalization of conduct in the relations of parents and children. With natural parents the emotional elements and the jural and moral elements of the relationship are completely interfused. With proxy parents the former yield precedence to the latter, and it is often easier to study the jural and moral elements of the relationship with proxy parents than with own parents. The widest range within which the relationship of successive generations is recognized is principally distinguished by ritual and ceremonial customs. We thus get a series [601] beginning with people who will describe each other, if questioned, as 'my own father (mother) (*m-mɛŋ ba* (*ma*))' and 'my own child (*m-mɛŋ bii*)', or by some equivalent phrase; stretching to those who refer to each other as *ba-pit* or *ma-pit*, younger father or mother (or if it is a father's older brother or mother's older co-wife, *ba-bier* and *ma-bier*), and *bier*[1] *bii*—child of older sibling of the same sex (or *pit bii*—child of younger sibling of the same sex); and ending with people who say of their classificatory parent or child 'I only call him father (mother, child) (*mbuon u la mbɔ* (*ma, bii*))'. There is always a physical difference of generation between own parents and children, generally such a difference between close proxy parents and their siblings' or co-wives' children, but quite often little or no difference of age between classificatory parent and child at the limit of the range. It is quite a common thing to meet

[1] *Bier* is the common term for senior by age or generation; but it is a curious point that the usage quoted above is not exclusive. Tallensi also describe a father's older brother as *ba-kpeem* (elder father), and a mother's older co-wife as *ma-kpeem*. But this form is more commonly used to refer to a grandparent. The context makes it clear whether the reference is to a proxy parent or a grandparent. The use of *kpeem* instead of *bier* may be a borrowing from the Gonja and Namnam, whose dialects are closer to Mole than to Dagbane and who have the dialect variants *kɛma* and *yɛbaga* for senior and junior.